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NH Office of the Child Advocate

COVID-19

In December, 2020, DCYF released an updated [COVID-19 Child and Family Well-Being Guide](#). It is a great resource for families in difficult times.

Check out the [Department of Education](#) webpage for the COVID-19 Schools Dashboard for information about schools and community resources.

Stress is high, families are worried. Call the [Warmline](#) for advice and a listening ear. 800-640-6486 Mon-Fri 8:30 AM—4:30 PM.

Outreach

The OCA is in the final stages of a project to reach out to children placed in residential care. Through an appropriation of the CARES Act, we have created COVID Survival Kits to be distributed statewide (observing all COVID protocols). These kits are backpacks containing comfort items such as fuzzy socks and fleece blankets, age-appropriate activities such as color-your-own masks, journals,



word games, and personal hygiene items. We will include materials introducing the Office to children and some basic self-advocacy tips.

Simultaneously, the OCA is looking forward to establishing periodic "office hours" with children in each residential facility to allow staff to check in directly with children. In this way, we will hear their views so they may contribute to system change.

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OUR WORK

178 cases in 2021

Safety Science

The Child Advocate and Associate Child Advocate are preparing for a new System Review Mapping (SRM) of a critical incident. This new process will use human factors debriefing techniques with involved field

staff to allow them to contribute to system assessment. Also, together with partners, Collaborative Safety, LLC, research has begun to assess the effectiveness of the prior System Learning Review process. Stay tuned for results.

NH Office of the Child Advocate



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Oversight

The OCA held its monthly virtual office hours with children at SYSC, and is expanding to all residential facilities across the state. These "office hours" enable any child to ask questions and share concerns directly with OCA staff.

Other oversight activities recently include 28 critical incident reviews of child deaths, parent deaths, and serious injuries; and 110 case complaint reviews. OCA staff have attended meetings of the Children's System of Care Advisory Council, the AG's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect, the Perinatal Substance Exposure Task Force and the Child Fatality Review Committee.

2020 Training Opportunities

2/2/21

Remote Advocacy Training- New Futures

[Register](#)

2/4 & 11/21

Advocacy Training, Basic 1.0- NAMINH

[Register](#)

2/10/21

Budget Advocacy Training- New Futures

[Register](#)

02/10/21

Coffee & Conversations: The Choose Love Movement- Transforming NH's System of Care for Children's Behavioral Health, - UNH- Carsey School of Public Policy.

[Register](#)

3/6 & 3/21

Advocacy Training, Advanced 2.0- by NAMINH

[Register](#)

On January 19th over 400 people participated in a webinar for the Juvenile Probation Transformation initiative. Experts from the Annie E. Casey Foundation presented national trends in new, developmentally sensitive and trauma-informed approaches to probation services.

Learn more about New Hampshire's plans at our [NH Juvenile Probation Transformation page](#).

Congratulations

Director of the Division for Children, Youth and Families, Joseph Ribsam, Jr. has been selected as a [2021 Casey Excellence for Children Award \(CECA\)](#) winner!



OUR IMPACT

4300+ cases

*Since our inception
January 30, 2018*

Public Health Alert:

Wear a mask and wash your hands. You could save a life!

A Message from the Child Advocate

Like so many others, I was wowed by the talents of Amanda Gorman, the nation's first Youth Poet Laureate, who read her original poem, [The Hill We Climb](#), at the presidential inauguration. To be so young and inspirational is a gift she is sharing with the world.



The Child Advocate, Dr. Moira O'Neill



My hope is the young people of New Hampshire see her accomplishments and use them to find their own unique talents and gifts they can share with the world. We, the adults, need to foster this desire and create opportunities to allow all children to explore who they are and who they want to be, regardless of their circumstances. If they need help finding that voice, they deserve at the very least, one caring adult to help them on this journey. Is this you? Could it be?

Dr. Robert Sege, who directs the Center for Community-engaged Medicine at Tufts University, with his colleagues have described HOPE as the best medicine for adverse childhood experiences (ACE). By HOPE they mean Health Outcomes from Positive Experiences. The framework of HOPE contributes to healthy development and well being. It also prevents or mitigates the effects of ACEs. The primary pillar of HOPE and the most effective positive experience, is a nurturing, consistent, trusted relationship with a caring adult. And it does not take much to be that adult. Earlier this month I met with Brooke Raney from [One Trusted Adult](#). Brooke has built a program grounded in frameworks like HOPE. One Trusted Adult training is an evidence-based program assisting adults to develop skills for making themselves accessible, approachable and trusted in the eyes of young people. Make it a goal of yours to be a trusted adult, maybe you will inspire poetry from young hearts.

Got a problem or complaint? Your first call should be to the:

DHHS Ombudsman's Office

Telephone	603-271-6941
Toll Free Number	800-852-3345 ext. 6941
TDD Access Relay	800-735-2964
Fax Number	603-271-4632
Email	Ombudsman@dhhs.nh.gov
Street address	105 Pleasant St, Concord NH 03301
Mailing address	Office of the Ombudsman, NH DHHS, 129 Pleasant St, Concord NH 03301

If you think a child is in danger,

call 9-1-1 immediately.

To report suspected abuse or neglect

call 1-800-894-5533.

Policy Watch

An overview of the policies and legislation the OCA is following.



NH House Bills

[HB 188](#), relative to appointment of counsel in juvenile court proceedings

[HB 427](#), prohibiting corporal punishment of children in state agency programs

[HB 254](#), relative to the placement of minors in secure settings

[HB 96-FN](#), establishing the office of school counseling and psychology, establishing the position of school counselor coordinator, and making an appropriation therefor

[HB 68](#), relative to the definition of child abuse

NH Senate Bills

[SB 93-FN](#), relative to permanency planning under the child protection act

[SB 94](#) relative to juvenile diversion programs

Federal Bills

[H.R.66](#) — 117th Congress (2021-2022) CARING for Kids Act

[H.R.5053](#) — 116th Congress (2019-2020) Justice for Juveniles Act

[H.R.128](#) — 117th Congress (2021-2022) To provide alternatives to incarceration for youth, and for other purposes.

[H.R.131](#) — 117th Congress (2021-2022) To amend the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 to provide for the humane treatment of youths who are in police custody, and for other purposes.

Policies, etc.

He-C 801 “Psychiatric Residential Treatment Program”